

History Gram Activity

Purpose	This is a team-building activity that will “write” the history of the school. It will help everyone see that many initiatives have been started over the years and that most did not last. It is important to get everyone to understand what it will take to keep this effort going.
Target Audience	All staff
Time	One hour
Materials	Newsprint or a long roll of poster paper, color markers, masking tape or tacks. A large room with wall space is needed. Number of staff and students, over time, if available.
Toolkit Reference	Chapter 4

- Directions**
1. Draw a timeline across the top of the poster paper. An administrator or veteran teacher can help you know in what year to begin the historical reflection. We recommend that you start with the year that the school opened or the year that is represented by the staff member with the greatest longevity at the school. Place demographic information across the timeline, as well, if any is available from specific times in history. For example: student enrollment, number of teachers/employees, federal programs, state initiatives, awards, championships, etc.
 2. At different locations under the timeline, write:
Era, School Culture, and Community Values
 3. Hang the timeline around a large room or gymnasium.



4. Direct staff to walk over and stand by the year they came to the school. (Make sure you take a picture. It will look like a human bar chart.)

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5. Ask each group that forms by the years to write short descriptors of the *era*, *school culture*, and *community values* representing that time in the school's history.
6. Have each "era" report out, starting with the longest-term employee.
7. When finished, ask for additional comments or ask participants to answer the question, *What have we forgotten?*
8. Ask participants to move to tables in groups of four to six per group and answer the question, *What did we see and hear during this activity?*

Comments to the Facilitator

This is a team-building activity to show each person's place in the history of the school organization and to review school improvement initiatives, over time. What the staff should see is that there were many initiatives started for the right reasons, but stopped when something else came along or when an initiative became difficult to implement.

Ask questions like, *Now that we have a shared vision based on what all of us believe will increase student learning, what stands between where we are right now and where we want to be with respect to our vision?* It is that gap in reality that makes us uncomfortable and make things difficult to keep going. So, *What do we need to do to close that gap?* Possibilities:

- Make sure the shared vision is very clear to all.
- Build a plan to get to the vision that is comprehensive and based on research.
- Who is going to do what?
- What are we going to keep that is still useful to staff and beneficial to students?
- What did we learn that is still useful to us?